

Optometry clinic keeps eye care in its sights

by Airman 1st Class Stephen Collier
49th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

January highlights one of the most vital organs in the human body as National Eye Care Month promotes education and instruction on proper eye care procedures. For information on eye care prevention and treatment, there’s only one place on base to go.

The 49th Aeromedical-Dental Squadron’s Optometry flight assists Team Holloman members with their visually based questions and concerns. Airmen and their families, as well as retirees and German Air Force members, can protect their eyes just by simply following safety procedures said Master Sgt. Kevin Wood, Optometry flight NCO in charge.

“One of the things we see on a regular basis in the clinic is patients who don’t utilize proper eye protection,” Sergeant Wood said. “Activities including lawn care, working on vehicles and sporting events require safety eye wear because of the danger of the activities to a person’s sense of sight.”

For those who use glasses and contact lenses, more safety requirements are employed to keep a person’s eyes from becoming injured. Steps

must be taken to ensure one’s safety whether eye wear is used on the job or off-duty.

“Those servicemembers required to use safety eye wear on the job can do one thing to prevent injury - keep their glasses on,” Sergeant Wood said. “Some of the biggest duty-related injuries we see in the clinic are from people who have been issued industrial safety glasses. The problem is that people aren’t keeping the glasses on their face.”

Sergeant Wood said contact lenses can help lower the discomfort of normal glasses and decrease distortion in vision, but there are downsides.

“We see a lot of preventable contact lens abuse,” he said. “Some of the patients we see suffer from over wear of their lenses.”

Aside from potential injuries from contact lenses, Sergeant Wood said normal glasses tend to be cheaper than their counterpart.

Another option open to those with corrected vision was offered by Air Force Vice Chief of Staff Gen. T. Michael Moseley who signed into effect an expanded laser eye surgery program called the Warfighter Laser Program. Laser-Assisted In Situ Keratomileusis, or LASIK eye surgery, is just one of the procedures offered to

correct vision.

“For members interested in the program,” Maj. James Hamer, Aerospace Medicine flight commander, said, “the first step is to make a routine appointment at the eye clinic and inquire, during routine evaluation it can be determined whether the procedure is a safe and effective option for the individual and whether they meet Air Force guidelines.”

Compared to glasses and contact lenses, laser eye surgery still comes with its risks, Major Hamer said. In a small percentage of patients, the eye doesn’t heal correctly or blurred vision occurs after the surgery.

Once a patient has been identified as a good candidate for the operation, members will usually wait between six and 18 months for a surgery date.

Servicemembers and their families are encouraged to have a regularly scheduled eye exam once every three years, Sergeant Wood said. Individuals with diabetes or other diseases should have their exam bi-annually.

For Team Holloman members who suffer from eye problems or have general questions on eye care, contact the Optometry clinic at 572-7200.



An optometry technician performs testing, which determines visual acuity while reading, to Airman Shakira Ramie, 49th Logistics Readiness Squadron Vehicle Maintenance member.

Left: Master Sgt. Kevin Wood calculates a prescription in current glasses using a lensometer.



Maj. James Hamer, left, performs a slit lamp examination on Margaret Marak, a patient, to access the health of the cornea and external structures of the eye such as lids and lashes.

Photos by Airman 1st Class Stephen Collier